



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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'Ghost Nets' Find New Life as Alternative Energy

HONOLULU (13 January 2006) Starting today, derelict fishing and cargo nets (also known as "ghost nets") that haunt the ocean around Hawai'i will begin to be converted from debris to energy under a NOAA-funded project involving 11 private companies and government agencies. The funding was secured through the efforts of U.S. Senator Daniel K Inouye.

"Marine debris, including abandoned gear and lost cargo, haunts our oceans, entangling and killing fish, marine mammals, and seabirds," said Inouye. "Hawaii's marine community, from the concerned members of our fishing industry to federal agencies such as NOAA, know this is a particularly acute problem in the region and have worked together for years to remove tons of marine debris from our islands and seas. This innovative project not only rids the oceans of debris, but will produce alternative energy to serve the community. I commend our scientists, managers, and industry for creating a model for the nation to follow, and am proud to have supported their important work."

The fishermen find the derelict nets when on fishing trips up to 1,000 miles offshore. The fishermen voluntarily take time to retrieve the derelict nets from the high seas and transport them to Honolulu Harbor. Tons of debris are removed annually by the fishermen—at no cost to taxpayers.

"For years, Hawai'i longline fishermen have helped to promote safe navigation, and as a result, Hawaii's environment, by removing the ghost nets from the ocean before the debris made it to shore," said Sean Martin, president of the Hawai'i Longline Association, which represents 132 Hawai'i-based longline vessels that harvest tuna and swordfish. "This voluntary effort will go one step further as the nets are converted to alternative energy."

Under the new program, the landed nets will be converted into alternative energy at Honolulu's H-Power plant instead of being dumped at the county landfill. According to the Hawaii State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, one ton of derelict nets provides enough electricity to power one O'ahu household for five months.

Here's how the program works:

- Fishermen from the Hawai'i Longline Association will retrieve the nets and bring them to Pier 38, where a brand new 31-cubic-yard roll-off container, dedicated to the derelict nets is located.
- Pacific Ocean Producers and the United Fishing Agency will unlock the containers when fishermen call with nets to dispose. They will keep the container locked at other times to ensure that only derelict nets and ropes are placed in it.
- When the bin is full, Schnitzer Steel Hawai'i Corp. (formerly Hawai'i Metal Recycling) will transport the nets to its facility, chop them into pieces and then transport them to the City and County of Honolulu's H-Power facility.
- At the H-Power facility, operated by Covanta Energy, the nets are burned, converting them into alternate energy.

"This is an exemplary project," remarked Rene Mansho, Community Relations Director at Schnitzer Steel Hawai'i Corp. "In our mission to recycle, fight illegal dumping and divert waste from our landfills, we found this team effort in caring for our environment to be truly complex and challenging. We are proud to be a partner in this remarkable endeavor."

Time, labor, and equipment are being donated by all partners, which also include the City and County of Honolulu (which has waived all tipping fees), Hawai'i Department of Transportation-Harbors Division (which has jurisdiction of the property where the bin is kept), Matson Navigation Co. (which transported the bin free-of-charge to Honolulu from Seattle, Wash.) and the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (which have helped facilitate and promote the program).

"This new program is the first of its kind in Hawai'i and would not be possible without the assistance of Hawai'i's longliners and the many partnerships that NOAA has with various agencies, organizations and businesses in the state," said NOAA Pacific Islands Assistant Regional Administrator for Habitat Gerry Davis, who heads the project. It is one of five marine debris projects in Hawai'i funded by NOAA Marine Debris Program in fiscal year 2005 to fight the problem of marine debris and help protect the marine environment.

For more information, contact program director Gerry Davis, Pacific Islands Regional Office, NOAA Fisheries Service, at (808) 944-2200.

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On the Web:

City and County of Honolulu: <http://www.co.honolulu.hi.us/>

City and County of Honolulu H-Power: <http://www.honolulupower.com/>

Covanta Energy: <http://www.covantaenergy.com/>

Hawaii Department of Transportation–Harbors Division:
<http://www.hawaii.gov/dot/harbors/>

Matson Navigation Co.: <http://www.matson.com/>

NOAA Fisheries Service: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

NOAA Marine Debris Program: <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/>

Pacific Ocean Producers: <http://www.pop-hawaii.com/>

Schnitzer Steel Hawai'i Corp. (Hawai'i Metal Recycling Co.):
<http://www.schnitzersteel.com> and <http://hawaiimetalrecycling.com/MarineDebris.htm>

University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program:
<http://www.soest.hawaii.edu/SEAGRANT/>

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council: <http://www.wpcouncil.org/>